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PARACLESIS;

OR,

CONSOLATIONS

FOR A

DYING HOUR.

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PARRAOLISIS

CONSOATIONS



DEPT. OF



# PARACLESIS;

OR,

## CONSOLATIONS

FOR

### *A Dying Hour,*

FROM

A REVIEW OF THE EVIDENCES

OF

*THE RENEWED LIFE.*

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS

FROM

A FATHER TO HIS CHILDREN.

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By *ROBERT HAWKER, D. D.*

VICAR OF CHARLES, PLYMOUTH.

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Ο δε παρακλησις, το πνευμα το αγιον, ο περιμενει ο  
πατηρ εν τω ονοματι μου, εκεινος υμας διδαξει παντα  
και υπομνησει υμας παντα α ειπον υμιν. ΙΩΑΝΝ.

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PARACLESIS

CONSOLATIONS

A LIVING FLOW

A REVIEW OF THE EVIDENCES



A VOLUME TO THE BRITISH MUSEUM

BY ROBERT HARRIS, D.D.

VICAR OF ST. MARTIN'S, LONDON

OF A REPORT, IN ANSWER TO THE

COMMISSIONERS OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

IN THE YEAR 1841

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## P R E F A C E.

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THAT the private Letters of a Father to his Children are here unfolded and laid open to public view, is to be ascribed to the infinite importance of the subject on which they treat; which is not confined to person or family, but must be allowed to be universally interesting, and equally meriting the attention of every man. And if the humblest individual from the perusal, should receive under the divine teachings the consolation they were written with a view to administer more immediately to others, it will prove a sufficient motive for the publication. Indeed the Reader will derive one advantage from the nature of this correspondence.

## PREFACE.

respondence, which cannot but serve to heighten every argument made use of in the subject itself ; namely, the sincerity with which they were written. In those letters he beholds a Father speaking to his Children in the most open and undisguised manner, and on a topic which is too solemn to have engaged his pen lightly, and too awakening not to have called up his warmest affections. So that here is no room for dissimulation where the eternal interests of such near and dear relations are concerned.

How far the object proposed from the subject is attained in the performance, a perusal will best discover. The Reader, however, is desired not to overlook the importance of the thing itself, in the  
home-



## PREFACE.

homeliness of the dress in which it is cloathed. Elegance of expression is not to be sought for in a work of this kind. The letters are to be considered as rather the effusions of the Father and the Friend in an affectionate hour, when objects of eternal moment occupied his regard, than studied compositions. Besides, the life of the Author hath been spent for the most part, and without much variety, in the humble, unobserved duties of a parochial Clergyman. And what subject of finished elegance ought to be expected from a character of this description?

It is probable that both the work itself and the performance may afford subject of derision to the gay and the unbeliever; but these things

PREFACE.

things are but for the moment, and then die away.—There is an hour hastening in every man's life, in which the subject here treated of will become interesting, and demand regard. And if in that hour those feeble endeavours should minister under divine grace consolation to soften one sorrow, or to relieve one desponding soul, by lighting up *the valley of the shadow of death*, the design will be abundantly answered, and may the Lord of his believing people have all the glory.

*Plymouth, Charles Vicarage,*

*Nov. 22, 1797.*

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## INTRODUCTORY LETTER.

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MY DEAR CHILDREN,

I Send these letters after you into the world, on the most interesting occasion, which can possibly engage the pen of a Father. The subject indeed is no less, than what relates to that grand, and (strictly speaking) the only momentous part, of existence, your eternal welfare. In these Letters, I mean to propose to your serious regard, what may prove under His gracious teachings, who is the Great Comforter of his people, the truest consolations of a dying hour, in *a review of the evidences of a renewed life.*

B

We



We have already conversed on this subject, in some of those short, but highly interesting moments, when our minds have been under the guidance of that light, which like the bright cloud in the camp of Israel, went before *to cast up and prepare the way*. But the infinite importance of this topic demands, in my esteem, some more substantial marks, than the transiency of conversation. I could wish to leave behind me, for my children's perusal, the document of a written testimony upon it, *that you may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance*.—It hath been a very common usage in life, for parents to express their anxiety for their children's welfare, in this way, in addressing them by letter, on the subject, which they have had most at heart. I see no reason why I may not be permitted to follow the example. The design proposed,



posed, in the happiness of our children, is one and the same, though the object of happiness itself, and the means of attainment, may vary. The wisdom of the world hath for the most part been directed in prescribing rules of the art of *living*: mine I profess to is the wisdom of *dying*.

From the first moment it pleased the providence of God to call me to the duties and anxieties of the Father, I have felt the tender charities of such a relationship; and the resistless claims have but increased upon me, with increasing years. The walking seasons of your earliest life, while engaged in the puerile pursuits of unconscious childhood, have not unfrequently called forth the distressing apprehension for your safety. And often, when looking upon you in the defenceless state of your sleeping hours, have I hung over you with an affection, not less enamoured

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ed (though arising from a different stream of love) than what the Poet represents our first Father to have felt, for the tender object of his regard, "and beheld

Beauty, which whether waking or asleep,  
Shot forth peculiar graces."\*——

while in the view, and the imagination contemplating the perilous path, to which your riper years, if spared, would necessarily be exposed, I have felt the rising sigh bursting involuntarily from my heart, accompanied with a prayer not unlike the Patriarchs of old, *Oh! that Ishmael might live before thee.*† The Parent's heart will know of what I speak, and will enter with me into a full participation of these exquisitely tender, but altogether undescribable feelings, which are peculiarly his own.

\* Milton, Book 5.      † Gen. xvii. 18.

To all others I am well aware, they are among *the joys and sorrows with which a stranger cannot intermeddle.*

Through the gracious benignity of an indulgent Providence, I have lived to see you rising up into life, to act for yourselves : and, one by one, departing into the world, like the full-fledged offspring of the nest, taking wing in different directions, remote perhaps from me, and from each other. To send after you the Father's blessing, and to follow your flight through the world, with the Father's prayer, are now all the remaining duties I can perform for you ; and the only way, indeed, by which I find solace to those occasional seasons of anxiety which are the natural consequences of our separation. And blessed be that goodness, who, in erecting a throne of grace for the needy to approach, hath opened a source of relief in it for every occasion.—This I



find to be the outlet of all sorrow, and the inlet of all joy. It is here therefore I have referred all my wishes concerning you, and *by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving made my requests known unto God*: And here upon every renewed application I find a growing confidence in the divine favour, returning from every visit with more of that *peace of God which passeth understanding, keeping the heart and mind through Christ Jesus*.\*

Perhaps the foolish fondness of the Father, in looking back on the rugged path of life, which he himself hath long, and sometimes painfully trodden, would send forth the wish, that the way might be softened and rendered less trying to his children.—But I suppress the ill-judged desire.—I have been led down to the *Potter's* house, as the

\* Phil. iv. 6, 7.



Prophet we read of was\* to learn some of those useful lessons there taught ; and have seen enough to discover, that with all our fancied wisdom, we are no better than school-boys, in framing schemes for ourselves ; and as incompetent to point out into what mouldings, or vessels for use we should be formed, as they are to plan for themselves systems of education. There is but One unerring Judge of what is right. I bless God, my children's station, be it what it may, is in his appointment. And may He give them but the grace to see from what direction the hand appointing comes ; and as cheerfully to bless the Appointer : and sure I am the promise will be fulfilled to their experience, which hath never yet failed in a single instance ; *if in all our ways we acknowledge him, he*

\* Jeremiah xviii.

*will direct our paths.\** Nay, should it please the Divine Wisdom, in order to answer the necessary trials of life, to bring you into the furnace of adversity; and should the Enemy be permitted to heat it *one seven times more than it was wont to be heated*; yet even then, One like the Son of God will appear, walking with his people in the midst of the fire, that they shall not be hurt, *neither that the smell of fire pass upon them.†—* Oh! the distinguishing mercy of knowing, not only *the power of Christ's resurrection, but the fellowship of his sufferings.‡—* Who would not wish to be advanced to that high honour of following Jesus in the regeneration, that a proportioned nearness to his sacred person may be the event of his appearing in glory? I have often thought, and I see no reason to adopt a new opinion concerning

\* Prov. iii. 6.    † Dan. iii.    ‡ Phil. iii. 10.

TO HIS CHILDREN.

it, that if the merciful intentions of the Great Head of his Church and People in the appointment of various trials, were but more generally observed and regarded, the frequent murmurings of God's children would be converted into hymns of praise. And who shall say, whether even the most forlorn condition to which our nature can be humbled in the present life, may not be induced with this express intention, that when, like the *Pelican* in the wilderness, the soul is left alone, and all human aid withdrawn, the situation is thus rendered peculiarly trying, that the necessity of the divine presence may be more sensibly felt, depended upon, and acknowledged!

What may be the events with which *you*, my children, shall be exercised in your progress through the world, into which you are entered, I know not: Indeed I would not, were I able, anti-



cipate the information. It is sufficient both for security and consolation, that they are known unto Him in whose appointment they are, and who will bring them all forward, one by one, in due succession. Nor is it the smallest part of that consolation to reflect, that as he cannot possibly mistake the final happiness of his people, so hath he as graciously assured them, that *all things, how unpromising soever they may appear, shall work together for good to them that love God.\** My only prayers in your instance concerning them are, that as the Lord shall open the several successive pages of the book of life before you, the impressions of his Holy Spirit may be read in every line; and whether upon the whole, the chapters in your history shall be most prosperous, or afflictive, the life itself may be a

\* Rom. viii. 28.



life of grace here, leading to an endless volume of eternal glory hereafter.

It were to invert the order of things to suppose, that I shall remain to peruse much of this history, for which I now feel so highly interested. Much less that I shall live to see the close of it, and attend your dying hours. No doubt, according to the common course of nature, long before the period in which your mortal existence shall take place, I shall have been *gathered to my Fathers, and have seen corruption*. But it is on this very account, that I have so earnestly desired to leave behind me this last and truest pledge of a Father's affection, which may speak when I am no more.

Who may be among the appointments of Providence to attend your last moments, or with what circumstances your death shall be distinguished,

ed, belongs to that period only to bring forward. In contemplating a season so solemn and interesting, and respecting persons so near and dear to my affections, the mind ruminates a thousand images of distress, which the tenderness the father fancies, were he present, might be softened.—I pause——while ideas so awakening rush upon my mind, to give the momentary vent to nature's feelings.

But though I know not how, nor where; neither of the manner, time, or place, by which my children's departure from this world shall be distinguished; yet one thing I know—if the mind be but properly founded in the sure evidences of the renewed life; and *the blessed Spirit shall but witness to your spirit that you are the children of God*;\* the softest whisper of this divine

\* Rom. viii. 16.

assurance will be sufficient to counter-act all the surrounding evils. While this speaks to the heart, the effect of every other object will be but like the noise of a distant multitude, in whose clamour we have no concern. And then, whether your dying eyes shall be closed amidst friends or foes; in a distant clime, or on your native shore; whether your death shall be the effect of long disease; or some sudden cause; amidst the unconscious phrenzy of the fever; or in the perfect possession of your senses to the last; all these are but among secondary considerations of a season so awful. It matters not to which of the thousand doors of death we go out, while we know that He who hath *the keys of death* is with us in the passage, to conduct us safely to the invisible world.

I would fain persuade myself, that I shall have sufficiently prepared your  
c mind



mind by what I have said, for the interesting subject which is to engage my pen in the subsequent Letters.

I know, indeed, that all energy must be derived elsewhere—and to that sacred Power I look up. May He commission the labours of the Father to the instruction of his Children, that both may meet together to praise him in those realms of happiness, where the distinctions and relationship of this lower world will be no more, but where they *which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, shall be as the angels; being the children of God, and the children of the resurrection.\**

\* Luke xx. 35, 36.



## LETTER II.

I CANNOT more properly enter upon the interesting subject for which I write, than in previously establishing the certainty of the fact itself; that the object proposed to your pursuit, in *the evidences of the renewed life*, is attainable; for without this conviction, the very ground we tread on, and every step we take, will be but visionary.

It hath been much questioned, whether there be a possibility of arriving to any certain assurance in the present life, respecting our state in the future. Some have supposed that this is among *the secret things which belong to the Lord our God*; and have retired from the investigation with fear and diffidence; whilst *others* have gone so far as to deem it the highest presumption, to attempt the exploring what they conceive to be

hidden from all mortal view, and with a kind of vacant mind have demanded, How is it possible for any man to know what his condition shall be hereafter? But with all possible tenderness to persons of this description, I cannot help regarding such sentiments as rather the effects of inconsiderateness and prepossession, than the result of sober and dispassioned enquiry.—*Men err because they know not the scriptures nor the power of God* \*. In my humble apprehension, it were not only to rob the believer of one of his best comforts, but to impeach the faithfulness of God, to call in question the operation of those *exceedingly great and precious promises*, which are not subject to conjecture or probability, but *in Christ Jesus are all yea and amen* †.

It was one distinguishing feature of the gospel dispensation, and given ages

\* Matt. xxii. 29.

† 2 Cor. i. 20.

before

before it was promulgated to mankind, that among other happy consequences resulting from its operation, this blessed effect should follow: *all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children* \*. Hence therefore it must evidently follow, that wherever a soul is taught of God, the event of that teaching shall be to produce peace; and in the possession of this principle, a sure mark is afforded of God's children. So that if you and I are taught of God those great truths of the gospel, which is the express office of the Holy Ghost to perform, there can be no doubt but under those divine teachings, proof is given that we are children of God; and why should not those consequences follow, which the Lord so graciously promised? Suppose, for example, under this pu-

\* Isaiah liv. 13.



pilage of the Blessed Spirit, that you or I are taught the great evil of sin, and the all-sufficiency of the Saviour to take away its penal effects; and suppose that He, whose gracious office it is *to take of the things of Jesus and shew to his people\**, should so take of the Saviour's merits to apply to the sinner's necessities, as to give either of *us a personal* assurance, that they are so applied to our own wants and circumstances, and that we have an interest in them; will not such a conviction, and from such teachings, induce a peace of God *which passeth understanding, keeping the mind through Christ Jesus?* Nothing, according to my apprehension of things, can be clearer. It is said of Jesus *that he hath made our peace in the blood of his cross* †, and with this express purpose *that being justified by his blood, we might*

\* John xvi. 15.

† Col. i. 20.



*be saved from wrath through him* \*. Now that the inference from this glorious doctrine corresponds exactly to what I am contending for, is evident from what the Apostle Paul hath said: *being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ* †. Observe the expression. He says, we *have* peace with God; not *hope* it, or *wait* in the expectation of it, but *have* it. Had Paul considered the matter doubtful, he surely would not have committed himself in such certain terms, without qualifying the expression. And is not this a decisive testimony to the point in question, that the object of assurance is attainable?

But in order to demonstrate the subject more fully, and to distinguish *those spots which are the spots of God's Children* ‡, from the unbelieving world,

\* Rom. v. 9. † Rom. v. i. ‡ Deut. xxxii. 5.

which

which have them not, it is further observable, that the holy scriptures are not more accurate in any one thing than in drawing the line of discrimination between *him who serveth God from him who serveth him not* \*. The ungodly are said *to be without Christ, and aliens from the common wealth of Israel: strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world* †. And in a most awful verse their misery is thus described; *there is no peace saith my God to the wicked* ‡. I think it impossible for language to define the different characters more accurately than those scriptures have done, compared to the persons spoken of before; neither can I conceive any determined or appropriate meaning can be applied to any words whatever, if such contrasted distinctions do not fully convey the

\* Mal. iii. 18.    † Eph. ii. 12.    ‡ Isaiah lvii. 21.

striking distinction between the Lord's people and the unbelieving world. For while the one is said to be *without hope and without God in the world*, the other is said to *abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost\**. While the one is described as *aliens from the common wealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise*, the other is called *fellow-citizens with the saints and the household of God†*: and while God mercifully promises that *all his children which are taught of him shall have peace*, he as solemnly asserts, that *there shall be no peace to the wicked*. Unless therefore these different effects are induced in the different characters to which they belong, how are we to explain the book of God, or to depend upon the faithfulness of *Him that cannot lie, who hath promised‡*? Can there be a

\* Rom. xv. 13. † Eph. ii. 19. ‡ Heb. vi. 18.



question remaining but that *the work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever* \*.

And that these are not merely speculative notions, floating in the imagination, and unsupported with any substantial evidence, the testimony of the faithful, in all ages, have, with one general voice, concurred to assure. We read of a *cloud of witnesses* who lived under the old dispensation, and to whom Christ was preached only in types and figures, who, notwithstanding, were so firmly established, we are told, in the certainty of the promises, that though *seeing them afar off, were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and lived and died in the full assurance of them* †. And is it to be supposed that in gospel days, when these promises

\* Isaiah xxxii. 17.

† Heb. xi. 13.

which



which were seen afar off are brought nigh and realized ; when divine teachings are become more plain and explicit, by the ascension of the Saviour, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, and who comes purposely to guide *the Lord's people into all truth*, that the evidences have decreased in number, or in clearness ? How strangely were this to invert the very order of things, and to suppose the reverse of what was promised !

It was the express assurance which the Redeemer gave to his disciples, before his return to his father, after all the great purposes of his incarnation were accomplished, that *he would manifest himself to his disciples in a way that he did not to the world* \*. What this manifestation implied had been explained in some few instances, during our Lord's

\* John xiv. 22.

continuance in a veil of flesh upon earth, as a sample of the more abundant out-pouring of his blessed Spirit, which should take place in after ages, when the Redeemer was returned to glory. The *Virgin Mary* had a *personal* knowledge of it when she sung that hymn of praise, *My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour* \*. For otherwise, though she might have *magnified the Lord*, and her spirit *rejoiced* for the *advent of the Redeemer*, yet she could not have assumed that blessed privilege of calling Jesus *her Saviour*, in that particular manner which the term evidently expresses. Neither could the devout *Simeon*, who at the season of Jesus's appearance it is said, *waited for the consolation of Israel*, and to whom it was *revealed by the Holy Ghost that he should*

\* Luke i. 46, 47.

*not see death till he had seen the Lord's Christ, have known that this was the Lord's Christ, when Jesus was presented in the temple in substance of our flesh, and that this was the consolation of Israel he had waited for ; unless the same gracious power, which taught him to wait, taught him also to behold in Jesus the promise fulfilled ; much less could such a view have reconciled him to the earnest desire of death, though that expectation was answered, unless he had been assured of a personal interest in the consolation.—*But under this assurance and conviction, the faithful believer cries out, in a song of holy triumph and joy, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation* \*.——*Mine eyes ! Yes !* For it would not have satisfied the

\* Luke ii. 29, 30.



hoary saint to have seen it through the medium of any other eyes but his own. The words and testimony of *Job* are to the same important purpose.—*I know* (says he) *that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold (for myself) and not another (for me) \**.

In turning over the volume of the New Testament, in quest of proofs to the point in question, the only difficulty is, not where to begin, but where to end. I hardly know from whence to select, so as to furnish a sufficient number of clear and decisive testimonies, and yet leave a conviction on the mind that they are but selections of larger proofs, which might be gathered,

\* *Job* xix. 25. — So this passage should be always read and understood.



if necessary, from almost every page. To mention therefore but a few—The sentiments of *Paul the Apostle* on this interesting occasion, you may find incorporated in his discourses and epistles. *I know (says he) whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.\* I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them that love his appearing.†*

If you observe these expressions you will find nothing in them intimating the least doubt or uncertainty, but as matters fixed, absolute, and sure. The Apostle speaks of *knowing* in whom he believed, and as one *assured* of

\* 2 Tim. i. 12.

† 2 Tim. iv. 7.

the attainment of the crown of righteousness. And speaking elsewhere on the same subject, he says, *We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.\** But would Paul have desired this dissolution of *the earthly tabernacle*, and groaned earnestly for it, if *the house not made with hands*, had been a question of doubt or uncertainty? Would he so uniformly have been looking forward to the hour of his departure, with joy and delight, had he not the most perfect conviction, that when *absent from the body*, he should be *present with the Lord*?

To the same purport is the testimony

\* 2 Cor. v. 1.

of the Apostle *John*. His whole writings indeed are but an illustration of the great doctrine I am anxious to establish, and in which he hath shewn how much this persuasion operated in his own mind, which he laboured to inculcate in the minds of others. The uniform and pervading principle which runs through all his epistles, in reference to this purpose, is to demonstrate on the one hand the graciousness of that love which the Father hath bestowed upon his people, that *they should be called the sons of God*; and on the other, how believers should be enabled to ascertain the evidences of their adoption; *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.\* He that believeth on the Son of God (that is to the real purpose of this vital union) hath the witness in*

♦ 1 John iv. 13.



*himself.\** And under the impresson of this undeniable testimony, in his own experience, he breaks out into that animated strain of holy triumph; *Beloved! now are we the sons of God! And it doth not yet appear what we shall be:* that is, there are no images, or figures in this lower world, capable of conveying ideas, to what a degree of glory we shall be exalted; *but we know* (says the Apostle) *that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.†* It were to hold the faint taper of the night in aid to the blaze of the sun at noon day, to comment upon a testimony so decisive and satisfactory.

But perhaps it may be said, that instances, in characters so illustrious, cannot be accepted as models for general imitation; for it were presumptuous

\* 1 John v. 10.      † 1 John iii. 12.



to estimate the case of common Christians by such a standard. In answer to this objection, I would observe, that though it may readily be admitted, in respect to the *strength* and *degree* of evidence some difference may be found, between the faith of a humble *believer* and the confidence of an *Apostle*; yet in relation to the principle itself, from whence both are formed, I must contend that in all instances they are but one and the same. The grace of God, like the dew of heaven, falls alike in influence, if not in measure, on the stateliest tree and the humblest shrub. *All shall know me, says God* (in allusion to this great event) *from the least to the greatest.\** Hence *Peter* directs his general epistle to *them that have obtained like precious faith with us,†* that is, the Apostles. And *Jude* addresses his to

\* Jerem. xxxi. 34.    † 2 Peter i. 1;

*them*

*them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Christ Jesus and called.\** Paul also refers the *Thessalonians* to this testimony in themselves, as the proof of their conversion towards God. *Knowing, beloved brethren, (says he) your election of God. How?—For our gospel came not to you in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.†* And still, if possible, in yet stronger terms to the *Corinthians*, he tells them that though the Lord had gathered them out of the very refuse of mankind, yet (says he) *ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God.‡* All which prove (if testimonies can be admitted to confirm any one matter of fact) that respecting this interesting point, all true believers are the same, and that it is attainable in

\* Jude i. 1.    † 1 Thess. i. 5.    ‡ 1 Cor. vi. 11.

the present life. God hath hung round the walls of his temple here below with these trophies of the faithful, as so many banners of the triumphs of the cross, in order to animate the hearts of his believing people in all ages, that they may be the patient *followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.\**—And if *all these died in faith* (as we are confidently assured they did) why may not you and I?

I assume it therefore as a principle fully confirmed and established, that the object proposed to your serious regard in the following Letters, is attainable; and that it hath been attained by multitudes, who have long since entered into glory; and I might add from the clearest conviction, that it is in the possession of many now in the present

\* Heb. vi. 12.



hour yet upon earth, who are the living testimonies to its truth. Encompassed therefore with so great a *cloud of witnesses*, let me hope that your mind will not be staggered by the doubts and ill-founded objections of unbelievers. For recollect who they are which call the truth in question? For the most part, persons that are ingulphed in the vortex of worldly pursuits and pleasures, who are too much occupied in the circle of things temporal, to afford a sober attention to things that are eternal. And would any one to such judges submit the decision of a point of this infinite consequence?

I shall only request therefore that you will follow me, over the ground of enquiry, in the examination of the evidence I shall bring before you, with an awakened attention, suited to the importance of the object in pursuit: and both at your entrance upon it, and at  
every



every step you take in prosecuting the path, to look up for grace to guide you unerringly in the way; and then the hope is well founded, that the Lord will manifest himself to be a God hearing, and a God answering prayer, in affording such convictions to your own personal experience, as shall overpower every objection.

Just suffer me to add, as a finishing motive to the whole, that the attainment of the end proposed will not only form the best consolation for a *dying* hour, but become the truest comfort of a *living* one.—Seasons of sorrow, perhaps of sickness, or of vacancy, more or less, form a part in the happiest life, for which the world hath no provision. The most favoured characters we read of in Scripture were eminent instances of the kind. There were periods in the Patriarch *David's* history, notwithstanding he was risen from

from a sheep-cot to a throne, in which he could call nothing his own but affliction. In his kingdom, in his family, in his circumstances, how numerous and heavy his trials! But the consolation, under all, was this *assured* interest in the divine love, which I am so anxious to recommend to *your* pursuit. *In the multitude of the sorrows (says he) that I had in my heart, thy comforts have refreshed my soul.\* Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.†* And when you and I, under the divine teachings, can adopt the same language, we may assume the same confidence, and challenge the whole phalanx of created power to deprive us of that resource.—May the

\* Psal. xciv. 19.      † 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

Lord grant to both this desirable testimony, until we can say with Paul ; *I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.\**

\* Rom. viii. 38, 39.

## LETTER III.

IN bringing before you the *evidences of the renewed life*, as so many touchstones of character, the only difficulty I shall have to contend with, will be to confine myself to *general* rules, so as to answer the purpose of enquiry, without descending to *particular* instances. Were I to propose to you the faith of *Abraham*, or of the *Apostle Paul*, as standards whereby to estimate *the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*, you might shrink from the comparison, and I should counteract the very purpose for which I write, and instead of bringing consolation, it would induce fear and despondency. I know full well, that while vain and frivolous professors are assuming confidence on groundless hopes and speak  
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ing peace to themselves when there is no peace; it is the character of many a truly gracious soul to be continually doubting his evidences of the renewed life, and to be cast down with a thousand fears and misgivings. In order, therefore, that I may not offend *one of Christ's little ones which trust in him*,\* in proposing a standard to which the humble soul fancies he cannot aspire, I shall beg to premise, that the evidences for examination which I intend to bring before you, will be such as are in common to *all* the faithful in Christ Jesus, and in which the humblest and least advanced believer, will be found to be interested, as well as the highest and the best. The portrait of the Child of God, *which is formed after the image of him that created him*,† will manifest the family feature sufficiently striking for

\* Mat. xviii. 6.      † Col. iii. 10.

every renewed soul to trace the likeness by, whether he be himself a *babe in Christ*, or a *young man*, or a *father in God*.\* In the *spiritual* life as much as in the *natural*, the analogy holds equally good. For however diversified in an infinite variety the human countenance is formed, yet there is one uniform character to indicate the genus and species to which the whole belongs.—As in a state of nature, so in that of grace, a diversity of age, and size, and attainment, will constitute a vast variety in God's children. There will be some higher, some lower, in the scale of progression, like *the blade and ear, and full corn in the ear* ;† (to use our Lord's own beautiful figure) which define the different seasons in the natural world. But the humblest soul should remember, for his comfort, that these are but

\* 1 John ii. 12, 13.      † Mark iv. 28.

to many different stages of *growth* in the same principle, and not the smallest difference of *being* in that principle. The nature is the same in all. The smallest drop of dew on the grass is as truly water as the ocean itself; for it is the *quality*, and not the *quantity*, which constitutes the character. I shall readily admit, indeed, that it is a most desirable thing to stand high in the attainments of grace, and to possess the strongest assurances, that we have made *our calling and election sure*.<sup>\*</sup> But if a soul cannot climb high to gather the full ripe fruit of assurance, from the top bough on the tree of faith, still let you and I be thankful, and adore the bountiful Lord, if we are enabled to pluck from the lower branches, or even from the smaller twigs, which hang nearer to the ground.

<sup>\*</sup> 2 Peter i. 10.



The different degrees of assurance in the renewed life, arising for the most part from the diversity of operations by which the Lord is bringing home his people to himself, hath given rise to much apprehension of mind in weak believers. But if I may express my sentiments on a subject so truly intricate, I would venture to believe, that as far as they relate to the Lord's appointment in his divine operations, and not to our neglect or misimprovement of the means afforded, they are without sufficient reason. I say, *as far as they relate to the Lord's appointment*; for I cannot be supposed to include any of those various ways, by which, through sin and infirmity, we form an eclipse on the mind, and consequently darken the evidences of the renewed life. But in relation to the blessed Spirit's work on the heart, I humbly conceive, that in the great variety of operations, by  
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which the Lord makes his people *a willing people in the day of his power*, there must necessarily be produced different degrees of assurance in the life of faith, according to his good pleasure, *who divideth to every man severally as he will.\** They, who like the labourers in the vineyard, are called betimes to the knowledge of the truth, having had longer experience of God's faithfulness, will be able to give the more tried and approved evidences *of the hope that is in them*, than they who from being brought in at the *eleventh hour* can well afford. And such as are planted in the hour of the Lord and live in a high state of cultivation under the continual droppings of grace, may be supposed to bring forth more fruit in their age, than those whose lot is cast in soils of barrenness and without

\* 1 Cor. xii. 11.

moisture. There must of necessity also be a vast and striking dissimilarity in the *conversion* of persons gathered in from the highways of ignorance and profaneness, to such as have been trained in paths of religion from their youth.—The transition from death to life, in the *one*, cannot in the very nature of things be attended with a change so remarkable as in the *other*. And though ordinarily speaking, and to reason by analogy, in the new birth of grace, as in the original birth of nature, some travailing pains must accompany the easiest introduction to life, yet the circumstances will be as various as the corresponding circumstances shall vary.—The gracious operations of the Holy Spirit, who is the Author and Giver of life, in his divine influences, when leading the soul from a state of nature to grace, will sometimes be carried on with that *still small voice*, and  
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his sacred work of illuminating the mind, and convincing the heart of sin, be so progressive and gradual, that the highly-favoured subjects of his Almighty power will not be able to trace the very beginning of the manifestations of his mercy. I do not mean to say however but that in those instances, where the first advances of his grace are perceived, it will form, in the after stages of life, a subject of great joy to the soul. It must be, in my esteem, a very high gratification to a gracious mind, to be able to tell the *time*, the *place*, and both the *manner* and *means* by which the Lord begun to manifest himself, in awakening the soul from a state of sin to salvation. The pillar which *Jacob* erected in commemoration of this event at *Bethel*,\* and the altar which *Gideon* built in *Ophrah*,† among

\* Gen. xxviii. 18.      † Judges vi. 24.

many



many others, which if needful might be mentioned, are striking evidences of the kind. And no doubt many gracious souls, in all ages, in like manner, have hallowed the sacred spots of their conversion to God, and contemplated both the place and the means, with every other interesting circumstance connected with it in tears of joy. But however gratifying such knowledge may be to the soul, I venture to believe, that it cannot be essential to salvation; for had it been so, it certainly would have been insisted on in Scripture, in terms suitable to its importance. And indeed the necessity of it is superseded in cases where the *effects* of a real conversion of the heart towards God (which after all are the truest evidences) are eminently visible. If the fruits of regeneration appear, it cannot be so essential to know, when, or in what manner, the tree was planted.

ed. Evidences so palpable carry with them their own testimony. The product of grace cannot, we are well assured, be taken from the stock of an unconverted nature. *Men cannot gather grapes from thorns, nor figs from thistles.* And to use our Lord's own argument and authority, it is *by their fruits ye shall know them.\** In short, in every instance where the first advances of the Holy Spirit's work are not so clearly to be traced, the case is not unfamiliar to the poor man in the gospel who was born blind, and whose eyes Jesus opened; though you cannot perhaps like him describe either the process or the season in which the gracious cure was wrought; yet like him you can say, *one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.†*

It is a circumstance of peculiar satisf-

\* Matt. vii. 6.

† John ix. 5.

faction to me, and for which in the very moment of writing, while the recollection of it is warm on my mind, I desire to bow down with increasing adoration in every review to the Giver of all good, that not only "my own lot hath been cast in this blessed land where God is truly known," but that my children have been brought up in habits of piety from their very cradle. But while I desire ever to consider those distinguishing mercies with all due thankfulness, I would at the same time earnestly desire never to lose sight of this most unquestionable truth, that these are but the *means* and not the *end*. Nature must be changed and regenerated before it can be made meet for *the inheritance with the saints in light*. Unsanctified Nature, however outwardly adorned, is nature still. —The Æthiop is but the Æthiop, though the pearl may hang from his ear.



ear. The waters of *Jericho* were beautiful to the eye, but the spring from whence they issued was all the while corrupt.\* In like manner, however fair and lovely the actions of unrenewed nature may appear, arising either from constitutional temper, or from education, or any other extraneous source; as these are all natural effects, and produced from natural causes, they are all short of a spiritual influence, having reference to nature only, and terminate with it. The *five* words of our blessed Lord, *Ye must be born again*,† throws to the ground every hope of this kind, and is a final answer to every other pretension. Any thing short of this is short of all. So that comparative views of human life of man with man, however gratifying they may be to the pride of our nature, yet in respect

\* 2 Kings ii. 19, 20.    † John iii. 7.

to our acceptance before God, lose their very name. — Man, universally speaking, in the present state is fallen, corrupt, and sinful in his very origin. And not only doth he derive a nature from the original constitution, prone to evil, but in himself continual manifestations of it are breaking out, which no education can prevent. That *all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*\* is the decided language of Scripture. And if all have sinned, it is plain *all* must be changed (or to use the better term of Christ himself,) must be *born again*, or every individual deficient in this regeneration from the Holy Spirit, *cannot see the kingdom of God*.† The man of five sins, or five thousand, in this sense, is upon a level. For it is the *nature* that needs this change, and not the *situation*, or any outward

\* Rom. iii. 23.      † John iii. 3.

circumstance, which may become perhaps the predisposing cause to lead one into greater, or more frequent acts of sin than another.

Whether *you* are the happy subjects of this regeneration of the Holy Spirit, is the great subject of enquiry, and which I pray God you may discover from the marks of discernment which I shall bring before you.

The *first evidence* of the renewed life, and indeed the opening and introduction to every other, is the consciousness of being awakened to the exercise of the faculties of the soul, by the *quicken-  
ing* and *regenerating* operation of the Holy Ghost: by which that immortal principle, which in a state of unrenewed nature, is lifeless and unawakened to all its eternal concerns, is brought into a new and spiritual life.—Until this effect is wrought, there can be no apprehension of divine things. A man

may indeed converse about them by means of his *rational* powers, as the blind may talk of sight, or the deaf of sound, but a *spiritual* apprehension can only be induced by spiritual faculties. To this testimony all the sacred writers concur. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things.\** Here the line is drawn with great accuracy, between the apprehension of the mere *natural man*, consisting of mind and body, which can receive only natural things, and the *spiritual man*, which supposes the soul quickened and in action, and is thereby enabled to discover spiritual objects. And hence *Paul* when addressing the *Ephesians*, who are supposed

\* 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.



to be awakened to this spiritual life, expressly says, *you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sin.\** He doth not say you who were wounded, or injured in your spiritual faculties, by reason of sin, but absolutely *dead*. All which corresponds to the uniform testimony of Scripture, that the soul, in a state of unrenewed nature, is to all intents and purposes dead to divine things, and past all feeling, *having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through ignorance, because of the blindness of the heart.†* And were it not for leading you into too great a digression from the main point of enquiry, which is to ascertain your experimental knowledge of the doctrine, and not the doctrine itself, I might, under the same authority of Scripture, trace the whole of it to its source in the fall of our

\* Eph. ii. 1.

† Eph. iv. 18.

first parent. For when he transgressed the command of God; in the execution of that sentence God pronounced on his sin, *in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,\** he died this *spiritual death*. That this was a *spiritual*, and not a *natural* death he died, is evident from his history. For in his body he lived long after, but he lost from that day that spiritual knowledge of his Maker, which he had before enjoyed, and therefore might be said truly to die. And, consequently, we his children have been involved in all the deplorable events of that fall. And hence we find in the common circumstances of human life, though by means of our *reasoning* faculties, mankind can talk of divine truths, and some indeed have soared to great heights in the mere logical and mecha-

\* Gen. ii. 17.

nical parts of divinity, yet the *spiritual* apprehension belongs to those only who are spiritually taught.—However eagle-eyed they may be in natural things, it is to natural things only their perception is bounded. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh.\** It can go no higher. Nothing can rise above its source. This is the universal standard, mortifying as it may be to the unhumiliated pride of nature. Whereas the mark of those to whom the spiritual life is imparted, is, that *they are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.†* And thus while every day furnishes renewed instances of that awful truth of Scripture, *the world by wisdom knows not God,‡* when we see the greatest abilities in human science totally ignorant of divine things: we no less in many

\* John xiii. 6. † John i. 13. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 21.



humble souls behold, what our Lord thanked his Father for in his prayer, that *these things though hidden from the wise and prudent are revealed unto babes.\**

But I rather turn from the subject of the doctrine itself, to lead you into the examination of its effects, and to enquire, whether *you* are conscious of this divine operation wrought in your nature? Are *you* awakened in the spirit of your mind? And can you *personally* for yourself say, as *Paul* did to the Ephesians, *me* hath he quickened, who was dead in trespasses and sins? If you ask how it shall be known, the answer is direct. All effects correspond to their causes. A soul awakened must be conscious of its former inactivity and sleep.—If *you* are now quickened, and were before dead in trespasses and sins, the vast

\* Mat. xi. 21.



change which is wrought upon you, it is impossible for you to be unconscious of. A soul once awakened from the sleep of sin and death, is brought forth into a state of life and righteousness, and will of consequence find the operation of its faculties and powers corresponding thereto. And as we infer a living principle in the body from the due exercise of its several functions, so by analogy we must conclude the life of the soul, when we see actions demonstrating it. There will be desires, and appetites, and hungerings, and thirstings, after such things as are suited to its wants and wishes. And the body will not manifest more strongly its pleasures or its pains, in the several engagements with which it is exercised in things temporal, than the soul, respecting such as are eternal. So that the plain and obvious enquiry arising from hence, to every individual, personally

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ly considered, is—do *you* feel those desires and appetites of the soul as one awakened to an apprehension of divine things? Are *you* conscious of pleasure in the enjoyment, or of pain in the disappointment, in such matters as relate to them? Do you know what it is to hunger and thirst after that *living bread*, and that *living water*, by which the spiritual life is sustained in the soul?

Questions of these and the like nature, closely applied and followed up with prayer, for the illumination of the Holy Spirit to direct, will enable every soul, under his divine teachings, to ascertain his own character. You will plainly discover whether, in the exercise of those faculties of the soul, you are *yielding yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead*;\* or whether *sin hath still the dominion over*

\* Rom. vi. 13.

*you.\** That single trait of character the Apostle hath drawn will form a volume of the most decided information, when he says, that *to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.†*

I pray God that *you* may be enabled to trace *somewhat* in your own experience of this first evidence of the renewed life.—And if it be but the faintest, and most inconsiderable glimmerings of an awakened soul in this twilight of existence, be thankful, and recollect, I charge you, that these openings are so many decided marks of *spiritual* life, and such as the whole powers of *natural* causes can never induce. It is the blessed Spirit's work, and carries with it the clearest evidence of his gracious operation. And although in this divine science they who have made the greatest advances are but like the borderers on

\* Rom. vi. 14.      Rom. viii. 6.



the skirts of some new unexplored continent, yet to know that we have set our foot only on the shore, and escaped the shipwreck of nature is a glorious discovery. By and by we shall penetrate into the heart of the country, *going, as it is promised, from strength to strength, until every one in Zion appeareth before God\**.

I pass on to the description of *another evidence* of the renewed life, in the possession of which, we are authorized to infer a sure mark of grace. The evidence to which I allude is *the conviction of sin*. It might have been supposed indeed, that when once the soul is awakened, by the quickening influence of the Holy Ghost, from the state of sleep induced by the fall, to a consciousness of being; the very moment the new born creature of such faculties and powers opened his eyes to the con-

\* Psalm xxxiv. 7.

temptation



templation of himself and his Almighty Creator, the sight of his own depravity would instantly strike him. And accordingly we find this corresponds to what the Redeemer taught, that among the gracious operations of the blessed Spirit on the minds of his people, this should be the first in point of order: *When he is come (says Christ) he shall reprove the world of sin.\** Hence no sooner hath this act of regeneration taken place, than the highly favoured object of such distinguishing mercy, becoming as he doth the pupil of his divine Master, is taught, among the earliest lessons in the school of grace, this important knowledge of his fallen state *in the convictions of sin.*

It will be your highest wisdom, therefore, in searching the heart for the evidences of the renewed life, to look diligently for *this grace of God.* In this

\* John xvi. 8.

examination, however, let me caution you to be very particular, that you may not be deceived with false appearances, in taking the shadow for the substance. For besides convictions of sin, which are founded in the gracious operations of God, there are convictions of conscience also, which arise only in the guilty mind itself, unawakened by grace; and yet, though originating from a very different source, and terminating in a very different issue, shall sometimes put on so great a resemblance, that, like a tinfelled ornament to pure gold, it requires great discernment to discover the fallacy. Scripture abounds with the history of characters of this kind, where the alarms of an awakened conscience have induced such effects, that to all outward appearance they have seemed not unfamiliar to the convictions of the Holy Spirit. *Pharoah* evidently felt all that

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conscience could feel from its own awakenings, when he called for *Moses* and *Aaron* in haste, saying, *I have sinned against the Lord, and against you, Now therefore forgive I pray thee my sin only.*\* *Saul* no less had the same impression in the matter with *David*, when he lifted up his voice, and wept, and declared *David to be righteous, and himself wicked.*† But that these impressions were the sole effects of conscience, unaided by the grace of God, is evident from the sequel of their history: for *Pharaoh* still persecuted *Israel*, and *Saul* hunted after the life of *David*. Men may feel moments of remorse, may have occasional alarms in the recollection of their enormities; and of consequence may cry out under their pressure; nay, even so as to assume the

\* *Exod.* x. 16, 17. † *1 Sam.* xxiv. 10, 17.

words of real penitents : *Judas* himself imitated the language of *Job* when he said *I have sinned* : and *Herod* felt so much of this influence, that it is said of him, he *did many things* in consequence of *John's* preaching, and *heard the word gladly*.\* Indeed who could tremble more than *Felix* under *Paul's* sermon?† But all these and similar effects, proceeding as they do from conscience *only* unawakened by the operations of God, terminate as they begun. Though, like *Balaam*, they may occasion the sometimes sending forth a faint wish, *to die the death of the righteous*,‡ yet like him they have not sufficient influence to induce living his life ; but beginning in nature they end in the same, and leave no gracious impressions on the mind.

But however near in resemblance

\* Mark vi. 20.      † Acts xxiv. 25.

‡ Numb. xxiii. 10.

sometimes



sometimes the operations of the Holy Spirit may be to the convictions of conscience, blessed be God, there are yet sufficiently clear and discriminating marks by which both may be known. For as the one is founded in nature and the other in grace ; as one arises wholly in man, and the other wholly in God, proceeding from causes so very different ; and both in their origin, progress, and termination differing so very widely ; by a diligent attention to the several characters by which they are known, you will be enabled to discern whether *your* convictions are of the spurious kind, or whether they are induced from the merciful operations of the Lord.

Attend only to those very opposite effects in the operations of both, and under the divine teachings you will be enabled to form an unerring conclusion respecting them.—The convictions

which are induced, by the grace of God, causes the soul to consider sin as the greatest of all burthens, and a deliverance from it as the greatest of all mercies. Whereas, in the convictions of conscience, unawakened by grace, it is not so much *sin* becomes a burthen, as the dread of the punishment following it. A soul under the claims of conscience will cry out as *Cain* did, my *punishment* is greater than I can bear.\* A soul, under the convictions of God's Holy Spirit, will exclaim as *David* did, my *wickednesses* are like a sore burthen, too heavy for me to bear.†—Again.—The effects of conscience, in which grace hath no part, operate only during the paroxysm of suffering ; whereas the convictions of the Holy Spirit have an abiding influence upon the soul. *Lord in trouble* (says the

\* Gen. iv. 13.      † Psalm xxxiv. 8.

Prophet) have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.\* When he slew them they sought him, and turned them early and enquired after God:—nevertheless they did but flatter him with their mouth, and dissembled with him in their tongue, for their heart was not whole with him, neither continued they steadfast in his covenant. But what says the gracious soul? I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me.† I shall never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me.‡ Once more. The convictions of conscience, unaided by grace, lead the heart from God; the convictions of the Holy Spirit lead the heart to God. The language and desires of the one, like *Felix*, are, *Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.*§ The language of the other

\* Isa. xxvi. 16.      † Psalm li. 3.

‡ Psalm cxix. 93.      § Zech. xxiv. 25.

is like that of *Job* : *I will say unto God, do not condemn me, shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.\** And while the former will seek relief from any, and every object of a carnal nature, which may serve to amuse and carry away the mind from reflection ; and is sending forth the endless question, *who will shew us any good ?* The latter is unburthèning the heart before God, and can find no ease, nor comfort, until *the Lord hath lifted up the light of his countenance upon the soul.†* There will be also this further dissimilation of character under the convictions of conscience ; the sufferer will be always for softening the fore with hoping things are really better than they are ; and whatever hath been amiss he shall amend : under convictions of the Holy Spirit, the gracious mind will exercise that

\* *Job* x. 2.† *Psalms* iv. 6. 7.



jealousy over itself as to fancy they are worse; and that still greater transgressions will abound, unless restrained by Divine mercy. The *one* will be for touching the wound with a light hand; the *other* for probing at the very bottom. The *former* will manifest displeasure at every faithful reprover of his actions, and be ready to exclaim, with *Ahab*, *hast thou found me, O mine enemy?*\* The *latter* will not only desire the righteous to smite him, and it shall be esteemed a kindness,† but fearful men may judge too favourably, and overlook many corruptions; his prayer will be directed to God in the language of *David*, *Do thou, O Lord, try me, and seek the ground of my heart, prove me and examine my thoughts, look well if there be any wickedness in me, and lead me into the way everlasting.*‡ And, lastly, to men-

\* 1 Kings xxi. 20.      † Psalm cxli. 5.

‡ Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.

tion no more,—As in the origin, progress, and effects, so in the final termination, convictions of conscience, unaccompanied with the grace of God, and convictions arising from the Holy Spirit, are wholly dissimilar. While grace in the heart invariably produceth repentance and amendment of life; convictions of conscience, void of grace, begin in remorse, and end for the most part in despair. The *unclean spirit* may go out for the moment as *unclean*, but it is only to come back under another form: for the heart all the while is still his property and as he calls it, *my house*: he returns therefore with seven-fold more power, eternally to dwell there, and *the last state of that man is worse than the first*.\*

These are very sufficient outlines to define the essential properties of dis-

\* Mat. xii. 43, 44, 45.

tion between the operations of conscience, and the operation of God's Holy Spirit: And I cannot omit the present opportunity of remarking, that had they been more closely attended to, than experience shews they have, in forming the estimate of regeneration, it would have prevented many unjust conclusions, which have been made of that doctrine. I am fully persuaded, that it is chiefly, if not altogether, to the want of this discrimination, that so many have been supposed Apostates from the faith, who, notwithstanding, never was in the faith.—For if, through *our dimness* of perception, we first mistake the works of conscience for the operations of the Holy Spirit; and then, in the after stages of life, find the natural effect, is it to be wondered at, that false conclusions should be drawn from such false premises? Is it possible for a man that never was *in* grace,

grace to fall from grace? Men  
 may be *enlightened* by the apprehension of the understanding only; may *taste* and yet dislike *the heavenly gift*; be made *partakers of the Holy Ghost*, in the information of their minds as to doctrines; but in all these, there is no one act of *special and saving grace* on the soul, in the gifts of regeneration, of repentance, and faith which *worketh by love*. It is *tasting* only, which though sufficient when received with approbation, to excite the desire of receiving larger draughts to the purposes of salvation, yet *if rejected is nigh unto cursing*.\* When we see to what nearness of resemblance in grace, characters of no grace may approach, it may serve indeed as it is designed, to shew how very close and scrutinizing, every one ought to be, in examining his own heart for the proofs of the

\* See Heb. vi. 4, 8.



real principle; yet to confound both together, and because *some*, who for a time have made a profession, but without possession, have manifested afterwards, that they had no *part or lot in this matter*, to imagine the doctrine itself ill-founded, is wrong. For my own part, I would rather suppose, the fairest evidences of the renewed life, which I might behold in any man, questionable, however strong they might be, than suppose the pure testimonies of God liable to the smallest error. For, as the Apostle says, *let God be true, but every man a liar.\** Of grace it may be truly said, as *Gamaliel* observed of the gospel in general, if it were a *work, or a counsel of men*, it would come to nought, but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it.† It was not without the surest conviction that *Paul* declared himself so confident of this very thing, that *he who hath begun the good*

\* Rom. iii. 4.      † Acts v. 38, 39.

*work* in the hearts of his people, *will perform it until the day of Christ*.\* Even among men, as Jesus beautifully illustrated it under the images of a *Builder* and *Warrior*; no wise man begins his operations without intending to finish.† And is it possible to suppose, that that Lord, *whose gifts and whose callings are without repentance*;‡ and *whom he loveth he loveth to the end*,§ should manifest less wisdom, to begin his *own* work and leave it unfinished?

I have been more copious in defining the nature and properties of *this evidence*, than I otherwise should have been, on account of its importance as the introduction to every other, that I might guard you against that fatal, but too common mistake, of blending it with the convictions of conscience, by which men stumble at the threshold of the subject, and in consequence err

\* Phil. i. 6.

† Luke xiv. 28.

‡ Rom. xi. 9.

§ John xiii. 1.

in going through all the other departments. And if I have been happy enough to convey to your apprehension, clear ideas of its distinct properties, I would now follow it up, with desiring you to make a *personal* application of it, to your own circumstances. Search diligently, I beseech you, for this grace of God. You see how humbling the divine teachings are, and what convictions of sin they produce in the soul. Before this operation of God takes place in the heart, men satisfy themselves with slight notions of sin, and indeed when at any time through vanity they are prompted, to make comparative views of their actions with others; like those who walk on stilts, they then fancy themselves exalted above the throng. But when the soul is truly taught of God, it is brought down to the very dust before him. The soul feels the humbleness of *Abraham*,\*

\* Rom. vii. 18.



the self-abhorrence of *Job*,\* the self-condemnation of *David*,† the self-loathing of *Ezekiel*,‡ the sorrow of *Jeremiah*,§ and the conviction of *Paul*.|| No sin like my sin, the convinced soul will be apt to say; nor any burthen like mine: and like the *Jerusalem sinners* at the day of Pentecost;¶ or the awakened *Sailor* at *Philippi*,\*\* the only earnest desire and enquiry of such an awakened heart will be, *what must I do to be saved?* Your own mind will best inform you whether similar effects have been induced in *your* experience. If sin be your greatest burden, a deliverance from it must be the greatest object of your desire. If sin be your greatest trouble, it swallows up all lesser afflictions, as the rivers empty themselves into the sea. Examine then, whether *you are* seeking relief

\* Job xlii. 6.    † Psalm l.    ‡ Ezek. vi. 9.

§ Jerem. ix. 1.    || Rom. vii. 18.

¶ Acts ii. 37.    \*\* Acts xvi. 30.



from it, with an earnestness nothing can equal: with a constancy nothing can interrupt; and with a fearfulness and anxiety, lest after all you should come short of it; like a man crushed under some mighty ruins, with just power to lift a voice of entreaty for help, but unable to help himself, crying to God for deliverance?

I shall leave those questions with you for the mind seriously to revolve, and as faithfully to answer: and proceed to *a third evidence* in the renewed life, intimately connected with the former: namely, the proper apprehension of what is related in Scripture, concerning the person and offices of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Saviour of sinners. This follows immediately in order in the plan of salvation; which is *to repent and believe the gospel*:\* and corresponds exactly to what the Redeemer taught of the operations of the Blessed

\* Mark i. 15.

Spirit, that he should first *convince* of *sin*, and then of *the righteousness* of the Saviour.\* And it is such a plan of salvation, as carries with it, in my esteem, one of the highest proofs of the sovereignty of divine mercy. For when a soul is brought down to the lowest degree of humiliation before God; stripped of all self-confidence, and the consciousness of sins and iniquities abounding on every side: as the eye cannot behold to the utmost horizon of sense, a single ray of hope in any *human* resources; it is evident that unless the same *divine* hand that wounds, should point to some means of remedy, help can arrive from no other quarter; and therefore the soul under the pressure of sorrow would sit down hopeless in its misery, and sink into fullness or despair. What a charming instance is it then of the divine benignity, (and which I venture

\* John xvi. 9, 10.

to believe, more or less, every truly-convinced heart hath experienced) that the secret drawings of the Father to the Son should accompany the convictions of the blessed Spirit; so that while the soul is bowed down with a sense of sin, the Lord graciously inclines it *to behold* with some degree of faith, *that Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.\** The Patriarch *David* felt this in an eminent degree, when he declared under his convictions *he should utterly have fainted, but that he believed he should see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.†* And I am persuaded the same principle, and from the same cause, props the mind of the Lord's people under their first convictions, when like a garrison they are surrounded on every side, and all resources are cut off from the besieged, but what arises from some subterraneous passage

\* John i. 29.      † Psalm xxvii. 10.



80      LETTERS FROM A FATHER

unknown to the foe, by which relief is conveyed within. Whether the Lord, in his abundant mercy, hath followed up the convictions of his Holy Spirit in *your* heart, with revealing the all-sufficient righteousness of the Saviour, is the first question you are interested to inquire into, under our present particular: and the next to this will be, whether your conviction of the all-sufficiency of Jesus, as a Saviour, hath been followed with the *personal* application of it to your own heart, in the sight of God: it will not be sufficient for you to know the *first*, without going on to the apprehension of the *second*. The highest notions of the competence of the Saviour to the salvation of the world, without feeling an interest in the effects of this salvation, are nothing. For what would it be to you or to me, individually considered, to know Christ under all his divine offices, in the mere  
article

article of knowledge, unless we are *personally* interested in the benefits of them. It is enough that Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour, and able *to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him,\** unless he be so to *you* and to *me*? The grand question is, whether he be formed in *our* hearts *the hope of glory*?†

It would constitute more the work of a treatise, than the substance of a letter, to go over the ground of Scripture, in gathering proofs of the all-sufficiency of Jesus as the Saviour of his people. I shall rather assume it for granted, that you are already in possession of the evidences of his *ability*, and only desire to know your *interest* in him; for if God hath been your Teacher in reproving the heart *of sin*, there can be no doubt but he hath also, in convincing you *of the righteousness* of Jesus, as all-sufficient to salvation: so

\* Heb. vii. 25.

† Col. i. 27.

that

that the grand question remaining with you as an evidence of the renewed life is, whether you have property in the Redeemer's offices to call him *your* Saviour.

The marks and characters by which you may know this are very plain and discriminating. *No man can come to me* (says Christ) *except the Father which hath sent me draw him.\** Are you come to Christ? will be the natural question resulting from this declaration of the Saviour: for if so, it is evident the Father must have drawn you. And if the Father hath drawn you to the Saviour, your acceptance is secure; for Jesus declares, *all that come to him he will in no wise cast out.†* And the characters of those who come to Jesus are as faithfully described. It is they which *travail and are heavy laden.‡* It is they which *hunger and thirst after righteous-*

\* John vi. 44.      † John vi. 37.

‡ Mat. xi. 28.



*ness.\** It is they which are *poor in spirit.†* So that by only examining the qualities of the mind, and comparing them with Scripture declarations concerning them, the information will be easily gathered, whether our experience corresponds with the word of God, and of consequence whether we have a *personal* interest in the redemption by Jesus. Your own ideas will best inform you, under the divine teachings, whether you have this evidence of a renewed life, and can adopt the language of the Apostle *Paul* upon the occasion. *The life* (says he) *which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.‡* And when you can assume the same language, and say as *Paul* did, that the Son of God hath loved you, and given himself for you, you will have found by happy experience this evidence of the renewed

\* Mat. v. 6.    † Mat. v. 3.    ‡ Gal. ii. 20.  
life,

life, and live, as *Paul* did, a life of faith on the Son of God.

It is time to relieve your attention, and I shall therefore only in this Letter detain you with *one evidence more*, which, as Jesus hath been pleased to connect with the two former, I dare not separate; namely, the *judgement of the Prince of this world* in the hearts of God's people. *He shall reprove of Judgement*, (says Christ) *because the Prince of this world is judged.\** But under this I may be very brief; for if the Lord hath taught you the great evil of sin, and the righteousness of the Saviour, the *Prince of this world is judged* in your heart and affections: the *strong man armed is cast out*, and a *stronger than he is come upon him and hath overcome him*, taken from him his armour wherein he trusted, and divided his spoils.† If Jesus hath revealed himself, under his three-fold office to your apprehension,

\* John xvi. 11.    † Luke xi. 22, 23.

as the *prophet* to *instruct*, as the *priest* to *atone*, and as the *king* to *govern* his people: and if *you* know Christ, under those divine offices, what greater evidences can any soul require of the new and spiritual life?

I only for the present add a prayer, that the Lord may be *your* teacher in all divine things, and grant you to have a clear apprehension of *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*.\*

\* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

## LETTER IV.

I HAVE often thought, what a gracious attention the Great Head of his Church and People hath manifested, in affording them so many and various evidences of the renewed life ; that if *one* should at any time fail, they might have recourse to *another*. You can hardly open the book of God, in any part, but you will discover more or less proofs of this nature. The kind Redeemer well knew that there would be many seasons in the experience of every true follower of himself in the regeneration, when like *Paul*, in his dangerous voyage, *neither sun nor stars would appear for many days*, during which period *all hopes of being saved would be taken away*.\* He knew also, that not only from *outward* causes, but

\* Acts xxvii. 20.



from *inward* effects, his people would sometimes feel but too much the man of God's faithlessness, and now expect *the fleece to be moist*, and now *to be dry*,\* in order to confirm divine assurances. And doth it not form the most decisive proof of condescension and benignity in the dear Lord to his people, that so much regard hath been shewn, even to their weakness and unworthiness, in this particular, in so many and various marks being afforded them, that they might not despond in a tried hour?—As a proof of what I say, I would desire you to look at the 17th chapter of Saint John's Gospel, where you will find, in that most affectionate prayer, the Redeemer offered to the Supreme Father, in the close of his ministry, no less than *five* distinct evidences of the renewed life, all thrown together within the compass of a few verses of each other, by which the humblest

\* Judges vi. 37, 40.

and least informed of the Lord's people may be enabled to ascertain his own character. The *first* is his peculiar manifestation of his father to the believer, as distinguished from the unbelieving world. *I have manifested* (says Jesus) *the name of the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them to me. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but these have known that thou hast sent me.\** You see how clear and decisive this is as an evidence of the renewed life: where we find the manifestation of the Father to the Lord's people is made a sure mark of regeneration, opposed to that *ignorance* which appears in the unawakened world. To this testimony a *second* is added, in a subsequent verse, where the *manifestation* of God is followed with *knowing* and *believing* the truth of Christ's mission. *They have known surely* (says Jesus) *that I came out from*

\* John xvii. 6, 25.

*thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.\** Knowing and believing are strong expressions to denote that vital apprehension which *possessors* of the renewed life enjoy, contrasted to the mere nominal *professor* of godliness; and clearly discriminate character. But Jesus did not stop here. He proceeds to a *third* very striking particularity in his people, in having *given* them the Father's word, and they *receiving* it, and *keeping* it as evidences to whom they belong. *I have given them* (says Christ) *the words which thou gavest me: and they have received them; and they have kept thy word.†* And as if all this was not enough, the indulgent Lord adds in this chapter a yet more endearing mark in that *union* he hath with his people, and they with him, which forms a *fourth* most satisfying testimony of the renewed life. *I in them* (says Jesus) *and thou in me, that they*

\* John xvii. 8, 6.

† *Ibid.*

*may be one even as we are one.* And this union of Jesus with his people, on account of its infinite importance, is mentioned several times in his prayer.\* And lastly, the *fifth* evidence we meet with in this memorable chapter, and which is not by any means the smallest or least considerable, is that *separation* and *distinction* from the world, together with the *hatred* the world bears to the Lord's people on that account, by which they have been known in all ages. *They are not of the world* (says Jesus), *and the world hateth them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*†

You will perceive that I have only glanced at the several characters of distinction in those evidences, without amplifying observations upon them. My wish is to compress, as much as possible, within the smallest compass. What I have said will serve, however,

\* John xvii. 21, 22, 23, 26.    † John xvii. 14, 16.



to shew you the gracious intention of the Redeemer, in this accumulation of so many testimonies for his people's comfort within the limits of a short chapter; and will prompt you, I hope, to search for similar instances in the sacred volume. That the Lord designed them for the consolation of his people cannot be doubted, when we attend to what he says himself concerning them in this same chapter. *These things (says Christ) I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.\**

But though I have purposely studied much brevity in speaking of those evidences, yet let me hope that *you* will not pass them over so hastily. It will be both your duty and interest to examine your own heart by them as so many touchstones of character, and to make each of them separately and distinctly the serious subject of enquiry. For

\* John xvii. 13.

example:

example :—Under the *first* of them ; if Jesus manifests his Father's name *unto the men which the Father hath given him out of the world*, the question is, hath he done so to *you* ? That the Lord comes nigh to his people in sensible manifestations of his gracious presence in their seasons of worship, in their daily employments, and in short in all the various providences by which they are exercised, is a truth which remains not now to be questioned but by sceptics. An awakened soul is at times as conscious of the Lord's approaches, and at others as sensible of his withdrawals, as the natural man knows the presence or absence of the sun of this lower world, by the effects. That gracious influence, which not unfrequently awakens in the soul *before prayer* the desire of drawing nigh to God ; that gracious assistance his people feel in *prayer*, in helping their infirmities ; and that gracious manifestation

tation *after prayer*, in the kind answers which come down to the supply of their respective wants through Christ Jesus. What are these but so many proofs, and of the most positive and convincing kind, of the truth of the doctrine? And indeed of such, I may say, as *Paul* did to *Agrippa*, upon a subject equally ridiculed by the unbeliever in his days; *why should it be thought a thing incredible.\** Look into the world of nature, and see what a consciousness is every where manifested of the Lord's operations. Was you never led to remark the effect of the sun's influence on the hedges; how after shedding his beams on the flowers in some bright day, and melting the finer particles of his warmth, the volatilized odour, dissolved and suspended in the air, hath been scattered around in much fragrancy? And why may we not suppose that it is from the

\* Acts xxvi. 8.

influence



influence of the Sun of Righteousness shedding his gracious warmth on the soul, which brings forward the finer affections of an awakened heart in the fragrancy of devotion? Nothing can be more clear and evident, than that all the works of *nature* depend upon the sun of this lower world, as the great vivifying source of their existence. *Thou hidest thy face* (says David), *they are troubled; thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust.\** And shall it be thought that the God of *grace* is less attentive to the highly favoured objects of his bounty in the intellectual? Most unquestionably, as in nature so in grace, the God of both hath methods of communication so as to impart what influence he sees proper, and by what medium he pleases. And the souls of his believing people are as sensible of those manifestations in his approaches and withdrawals,

\* Psalm civ. 29.



from their effects, as the several works of nature testify their apprehension of that influence under which they live. I have been led frequently to consider that humble but little regarded flower the *Heliotrope*, or *Turnsole*,\* as it is commonly called, and so distinguished from the peculiar properties of its nature, as highly illustrative of this doctrine. This plant lives so much under the sun's influence, that its face is always inclined towards it. When the great luminary of the day climbs the heavens and advances to its meridian, the *Heliotrope* lifts its head towards it, and follows it with much seeming enjoyment, until the object of her affection is gone down the Western Hemisphere; unfolding her leaves to receive all the vivifying influence of his beams while above the Horizon, and closing them as soon as set. A beautiful, but

\* *Heliotropium*, ex *Ηλιο* et *τροπον*, quod se circumagat cum sole.—*PLINY*.

modest

modest emblem of the believer; who, in his *hidden* life, desires to turn only to the Sun of Righteousness, lifting up the head with joy while under his manifestations, and drooping during his absence; and though constantly open to receive out of his fulness grace for grace, yet wishing to be close shut to every other.

But I lose time in contending for the doctrine. My present province is to lead you rather into the enquiry, whether you have experienced a *personal* proof of it? —Suffer me once more therefore to repeat the question: Hath Jesus manifested the Father to *you*? Remember that this is the grand point, in which the subject terminates. *If a man love me (says Christ) my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* Examine the evidences by their effects. And while you are seeking, may *Jesus himself* draw nigh to you, as he did to his disciples in their

way to *Emmaus*. And should *your eyes* be holden for a while as theirs were, while *talking by the way*, yet if by earnest prayers you *constrain* the unknown Saviour to tarry with you through the night of ignorance until the day, depend upon it he will manifest himself to you as he did to them, and not unprobably it may be in that solemn ordinance which he himself hath so graciously appointed *in breaking of bread*.

I might lead you through the several heads for examination under the other evidences which Jesus hath marked in this chapter; but I should hope the outlines which I have drawn of the *first* of them will serve as so many specimens of what might be sketched of the rest. You cannot be at a loss, I think, to discriminate that knowledge and belief which Jesus speaks of in the *second* evidence, and which in itself implies a heart-searching and an heart-convincing



convincing proof of the gospel, from that *historical* head-knowledge and belief with which thousands sit down contented in their reception of divine truths. If the mere consent of the understanding to the faith of the gospel constituted a true believer, devils themselves would be in grace, for they are said *to believe and tremble*.\* Let nothing therefore satisfy your mind in seeking this evidence of the renewed life, short of that knowledge *which maketh you wise unto salvation ; in putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*.†

In like manner, in your investigation of the *third* testimony spoken of, in receiving the words of eternal life, and keeping them ; see whether you have so received and kept them, as one that groweth thereby. If you have found that pearl of great price in the field of scripture, have you so found as to sell

\* Eph. iv. xxiv.      † Psalm cxix. 72.



all you have and buy? This is to receive and keep the word of eternal life, when *Christ dwelleth in the heart by faith*, and when *the word of Christ dwells in us richly in all wisdom*; when like *David* you can say, *the law of thy mouth is dearer unto me than thousands of gold and silver.\**

That precious union which the Redeemer speaks of between himself and his people, when he says, *I in them, and they in me*, and which I noticed for a *fourth* evidence of trial in this chapter, is so much the real effect of regeneration in every renewed soul, that nothing can afford an higher testimony of *being passed from death to life*, than when we are become *members of Christ's body, of his flesh, and of his bones.†* To enter upon a description of this union would be superfluous. The whole volume of scripture is full of proofs and illustrations of it. And the sacred writers are

\* Psalm cxix. 72.

† Eph. v. 3.

sending us continually to the most striking metaphors, in order to convey its clear apprehension. The *Vine* and its *Branches*.—The *Head* and its *Members*.—The *Marriage Union*—are made use of as so many emblems to represent it by. And as these are all very pertinent in illustrating the doctrine, so the subject of enquiry concerning this union, with the person of the Redeemer, may be brought to a very short issue. If Jesus be the *Vine* and you are the *Branch*, all your life, and moisture, and fruitfulness must be in him. If Jesus be the *Head*, and you the *Member* of this mystical body, one object, one desire, will be the uniform pursuit of both. Your language will be like that of *Ruth*: *Where thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought part thee and me.\**

\* *Ruth* i. 16.

And

And if Jesus hath *betrothed you to himself for ever in righteousness, in judgement, in loving kindness, and in mercy ;\** it is as is elsewhere declared, *that you should be for himself, and not for another.†* Examine your own heart by these marks, and you will find them so many standards by which may be clearly ascertained this evidence of the renewed life.

And in respect to the *fifth* testimony ; that of *not being of the world, even as Christ when on earth was not of the world*, the examination of the heart under a single principle will be sufficient to let any man into the secret of his own character in this particular. To what object of pursuit is your attention chiefly directed ; is it to God or to the world ? In every degenerated mind the idol of this world is dethroned, and *Christ is formed there the hope of glory. Ye are dead* (says Paul) *and your life is hid with*

\* Hos. ii. 19.      † Isa. xliii. 21.



*Christ in God.* Dead in affection to all the allurements of the world, and *hidden* in the life of faith on the Son of God, when you know that he hath loved you and given himself for you. What answer will the heart make to these scrutinizing questions arising out of this vast distinction of character? According to the reply, you will be enabled to judge for yourself. And as the testimony of an Apostle decidedly assures us, that *if any man love the world*, be his profession or appearances ever so promising, *the love of the Father is not in him* ;\* so on the other hand, when the mind is deadened to every pursuit which is merely earthly, like a mortified limb which feels no pain in amputating, the world will hang too loose to the affections to occasion any great distress in separation ; but faith will be always with the wing plumed, ready to take flight at a moment's call,

\* 1 John ii. 15.

to mount up with holy joy and rapture  
to meet the Lord in the air.

When you have made the necessary  
scrutiny respecting these several distinct  
evidences of the renewed life, suffer  
me to lead you by the hand into the  
field of enquiry, in reference to some  
other examinations of a similar nature.

I consider the giving way of the *car-*  
*nal mind* (which in scripture is declared  
to be *enmity against God*, and which in  
a state of unregeneracy *cannot be subject*  
*to the law of God*)\* to be *no small evi-*  
*dence of the renewed life*. The very  
first traces that we can discern of this  
natural aversion to divine things being  
rooted out, is a striking proof of the  
change wrought in the heart. For the  
word of God hath decidedly shewn  
that nature and grace must ever be  
hostile to each other, and like *the iron*  
*and the clay* in the image of the Prophet's  
vision, never can coalesce.† As in the

\* Rom. viii. 7.

† Dan. ii. 43.

*Patriarch's family, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit; even so it is now.\** Whenever therefore you discover *the elder serving the younger*; I mean nature brought under dominion to grace, so as to feel the hatred to the truth losing its holdfast in the mind, and the love of spiritual things taking place, depend upon it, the life of faith is begun in the soul.

In searching however for this evidence, I must admonish you to the same caution as upon a former occasion, in not resting satisfied with the semblance for the reality, and so after all *come short of the grace of God*. Though the carnal mind be enmity against God, and it is impossible in the very nature of things while unrenewed to be otherwise, yet such is the deceitfulness of the heart, that this hatred will sometimes be folded up so closely

\* Gal. iv. 29.

in its deepest recesses that it shall not be easily discovered. There are persons in whom shall appear perhaps so total an apathy to divine truths as if there was neither love nor hatred in their minds against it, but like *Gallio*, they seem to care for none of these things.\* — But whoever imagines that this time-serving Ruler in *Achaia* was really indifferent to the word of God, will be sadly mistaken. From an authority, not to be questioned, we learn, that *he that is not with Jesus is against him.*† There can be no neutrality. And *Gallio* was in the very moment of all this seeming indifference, as every other unrenewed man is, an utter enemy to the truth of Jesus. And the only reason why it did not manifest itself was, because some other more powerful principle at that time operated to call off the mind. Men may assume an apparent disregard to *vital*

\* Acts xviii. 17.    † Mat. xii. 30.



religion; may even go as far as to profess affection for the followers of *vital* godliness, on account of some constitutional good qualities they find in them; or perhaps from being connected with them in the social relations of life: nay, some shall advance beyond all this, and like *Ezekiel's* hearers\* profess to love to hear the truth, and sit as the Lord's people under a preached gospel; and should it so happen that the times favour religion, or any private by-ends can be answered by it, like *Jehu* shall cry out, *come see my zeal for the Lord*;† but all this is nothing but nature, unrenewed nature, not grace: the enmity of the carnal mind against God, is like a rotten core in the heart, lurking under all, and if their times changed their complexion, or occasion offered to unfold the depth of iniquity, the whole would come out.

\* Ezek. xxxiii. 30.

† 2 Kings x. 16.

In your estimate therefore of this testimony, let this be the single scrutinizing question by which you may try it, which if well applied will answer in the stead of a thousand. *Do you love the truth for the truth's sake, independent of every other motive?* Prosecute this enquiry under every form in which it can be applied, and depend upon it, if conscience gives an unequivocal reply and says yes, that your *former* aversion to *vital* religion is rooted out, and your *present* regard proceeds from a real affection both to the person of the Lord's people, and to their religion, on its own account; you may with safety conclude, however small and inconsiderate your own attainments in divine things may be as yet, the work of grace is begun in the heart, for such an evidence proves what *Paul* hath declared, that *while to be carnally minded is death, to be spiritually minded is life and peace.\**

\* Rom viii. 6.

While

While I am speaking of this evidence of the renewed life, I am naturally reminded of another, intimately connected with it, which the Apostle *John* mentions: namely, *of the love of the brethren.* *We know* (says he) *that we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.\** But I have so fully explained this testimony in my Sermons on the Operations of the Holy Ghost, that I conceive it would be superfluous to enlarge upon it by letter, when you can easily refer to the work itself.†—Suffer me however, in addition to what is there said, to observe, that this love of the brethren, peculiarly distinguishing them, as the people of God, is a love which will manifest itself to *all* in whom the grace of God appears. Not confined to party, or persuasion, to rank, or person, but universally to all *who love the*

\* 1 John iii. 14.  
particularly.

† See the 8th Sermon

*Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth.*

The renewed soul who loves a follower of the blessed Jesus, because he is a *follower*, will consequently love *all* that are his followers. And that you may know whether you have arrived at the highest attainment respecting this evidence, let this be your standard of enquiry. Do you love those most eminently among the Lord's people, who are most eminently distinguished by the Redeemer? Do you love them for those spiritual attainments by which they approach nearer in resemblance to the person of Jesus, even though hereby they soar above yourself? Here is a trying question to the soul; but certainly a very proper one. In *nature*, if an earthly parent distributes his gifts among his children with an unequal hand, it will occasion a thousand jealousies and animosities. But in *grace* it is the reverse. If my heavenly Father hath given to my brother

L                      greater



greater gifts and graces of his Holy Spirit than he hath thought proper to bestow on me; these are in the appointment of his wisdom, and unquestionably right: and my duty is to love my brother the more for them, as one eminently distinguished by my Father. I might as well envy angels for their superior rank, as look with an evil eye on my brother's situation. It may be, and indeed I confess it is, a painful lesson to flesh and blood, but remember I am now proposing to you not a lesson of *nature*, but of *grace*. And as we love the person of the Redeemer, because he is the most fair, the most lovely of all beings, and the *chiefest among ten thousand*; so in the scale of existence, he that moves in the highest orb of glory in spiritual things, by becoming nearer to the person of *Jesus*, will become the dearer to the Lord's people, and be esteemed the more highly

highly in love for the very grace's sake.

I have been relieving your mind from looking into the higher and more trying evidences of regeneration, in bringing before you those lesser marks just gone through. But let me now again raise your attention to *one* eminently great and interesting, and which I pray God you may be enabled, through his grace, to discover in your own personal experience: I mean, *the indwelling residence of the Holy Ghost in the heart*. This was plainly foretold by the *Prophet*, to be among the glorious events of gospel days, that *the Lord would come and dwell in the midst of his people*.<sup>\*</sup> And the *Apostle* follows up the assurance with the strongest certificate, that it is fulfilled in the experience of every truly regenerated believer. *Hereby we know* (says he) *that he abideth in us by the spirit which he hath given us*.†

<sup>\*</sup> Zech. ii. 10, 11.      † 1 John iii. 24.

Indeed as many of the *Prophets* were commissioned to predict, so all the *Apostles* concur in the testimony to assure, that the bodies of believers are the *temples of the Holy Ghost which dwell in them*.\* But it is not the certainty of the doctrine that I am engaged to notice, for that I conceive to be unquestionable, but the *personal* proof of it in your heart. Before I lead you to this examination however, just let me desire you to pause, in order properly to discriminate this indwelling residence of the Blessed Spirit, from that former evidence I noticed, of the *believer's union with Jesus*. Both, no doubt, are intimately connected in the mysterious life of faith, but as these are very distinct in their operations they are consequently separable to our discernment.—In our *union* with the person of Jesus, we *who were by nature afar off, and enemies to God by*

\* 1 Cor. vi. 19.

*wicked works, are brought nigh and become reconciled in the body of his flesh.* In the Holy Spirit's *residing* in our hearts, the Lord quickens his people by the operations of his grace. So that by the *one* we infer a sure evidence of the renewed life from our living *in him*. By the *other* we derive as positive an assurance from his dwelling *in us*. These are certainly distinct properties and highly meriting our observation.

For this gracious indwelling of the Holy Spirit of which I now speak, it is, that all those sweet communications arise, which are so refreshing to the Lord's people amidst the great variety of ways, both of providence and grace, with which they are exercised in the present world. The gracious Lord meets them in the ordinary walks of life, as well as in their more sacred seasons of worship: and they are as sensible of this *communion and fellow-*



*ship which they have with the Father and the Son, in a thousand occurrences, as when drawing nigh the mercy-seat, when their prayers go up, and answers come down, to the consolation of their hearts in Christ Jesus.*

Your enquiry, however, respecting this testimony may be reduced to a single point. *If Christ be in you (says Paul) the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness. And if the spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead hath also quickened your mortal body by his spirit that dwelleth in you.\**—The question therefore is very simple. Do you find this evidence in *your* experience? You see the characters are very sure and unequivocal. In whomsoever the Blessed Spirit dwells, the effects of his residence carry too plain marks with it to be

\* Rom. viii. 10, 11.

mistaken.

mistaken. His *presence* hath a transforming property on the minds of those in whom he dwells; *they are changed into the same image, from glory to glory by the Spirit, when with open face as in a glass they behold the glory of the Lord.\** Thou meetest him (says the Prophet) *that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways.†* And what is said of the *church* in general, is applicable to every true believer in particular: *while the King sitteth at his table, every grace will be in exercise, which, like the fragrancy of spikenard, sendeth forth the smell thereof.‡*

Your own experience will best inform you, whether you can bear a chearful correspondence to those precious truths, in which a very comfortable evidence of the renewed life is found. And just suffer me by the way to remark, that if your heart can echo back the testimony to this charming assu-

\* 2 Cor. iii. 18. † Isa. lxiv. 5. ‡ Cant. ii. 9.

rance,

rance, in having long known and enjoyed the sweet and transporting visits of the Saviour; what *present* enjoyment ought you not now to derive therefrom, and with what holy joy to be looking forward to *that hour* when you will dwell with him eternally? If those manifestations are so ravishing, now which are but short, imperfect, and transient, when the dear Lord stands as it were *behind the wall*, looking in at the windows, and *shewing himself only through the lattice* \* of ordinances: what will it be, when the intervening medium is thrown down, and you see him as he is? And shall not the long and well-tried experience of his faithfulness through life, and the frequency and familiarity of his gracious visits upon all occasions, induce in a dying hour an holy confidence, *to commit the keeping of your souls unto him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator*?†

\* Cant. ii. 9.

† 1 Peter iv. 19.



✠ I begin to fear that the consciousness of your short-comings, to the standard of this evidence, may have induced fear and distrust in the mind; and therefore I hasten to relieve it, in directing to *another*, which is truly consolatory, under all the unallowed infirmities of nature: I mean, *that conflict between nature and grace*, which the Apostle describes, when he says, *the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things ye would.\** In every truly-awakened soul this holy warfare is found, which makes the heart not unfrequently, like the *Shulamite* we read of *as a company of two armies.†* And this becomes no small testimony of the renewed life, because it uniformly distinguishes all the people of God. And what renders this evidence so decisive is, that, in a state of unregeneracy,

\* Gal. v. 17.

† Cant. vi. 13.

there



there is no conflict of the kind. The carnal mind feels nothing of the sort, but is carried down the stream of its various pursuits as resistless as the dead fish by the current of the water. It is possible, indeed, that now and then a momentary check of conscience may cross the mind, and alarm the sinner; but then these effects will be as short and transient *as the morning cloud or the early dew*, which the rising sun of the first temptation dries away. Whereas, in a truly-gracious soul, the conflicts of flesh and spirit arising from the *old man* of nature crucified but not dead; and the *new man* of grace formed, but not perfected; are perpetual, and will manifest themselves upon all occasions. The root of sin, like the ivy in the wall, is incorporated so closely in the old building of our nature, that notwithstanding the work of regeneration hath taken place, and its bud-dings are kept under by the pruning hand

hand of grace, yet till the wall itself falls down, the root will not come out. By and by indeed, when this event takes place, and the body returns to its original dust, sin will fall with it, and in the morning of the resurrection, when the germ of the spiritual life formed into a glorified body shall arise, it will be *without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*. But during our progress to the tomb, the two natures will be struggling, and thereby afford no inconsiderable proof of the renewed life. And it was not in my apprehension without a special reference to this, that the Lord swore to *Israel* of old that he would have war with *Amalek*, from generation to generation.\* For as every thing, more or less, in that eventful history, had a spiritual meaning, we may with safety conclude, that in the conflicts with the enemies of our salvation, the prediction is fulfilled,

\* Exodus xvii. 16.

when

when we find effects so uniformly corresponding in the experience of every true believer ; who is no sooner awakened to the spiritual life, but is called forth to action, and who when once he hath put on the armour of light, finds no moment of putting it off, until death puts an end to the battle.

I am well aware, that there are *some* professors of divine truths, who though not unconscious of this conflict at the entrance on the new life, fancy it lessens as we advance in the path, until at length nature is totally subdued by grace ; and hence in a supposed capability of attaining perfection in the present life, are seeking meetness for glory in the future. But if such be really in the possession of any, I can only lay down in the dust before God with an heart-felt acknowledgement that it is not *my* case. I sometimes indeed humbly hope, that under divine strength in the long war between the flesh and the



the spirit, the spiritual house of *David* waxeth stronger and stronger, and the carnal house of *Saul* becomes weaker and weaker.\* But every new skirmish of the foe tends but to convince me, that the warfare is not over, neither will be, but with life. X I find my advances in the walk of faith, more in *desires*, than in *attainments*; more in what I wish to be, than in what I really am. I feel but too much of what *Paul* complained of, more than *fourteen* years after his conversion: when he confessed that *the good he would he did not, but the evil that he would not that he did.*† It is no small alleviation to a tried soul to find an Apostle complaining of the same. But the great

\* 2 Samuel iii. 1.

† Rom. vii. 19. Paul wrote his Epistle to the *Romans* some time after his 2nd Epistle to the *Corinthians*, and in that Epistle he speaks of his conversion as fourteen years before. See 2 Cor. xii. 1.



reflection I confess, with which I am consoled, under all the *unallowed* imperfection of my nature, is the assurance of the Lord to his people, that *in him is my help found*;\* that all the sins under which my soul groans are unallowed in the very moment of commission; and that however they now oppress, by and by their burthen will be taken off: though they follow me, as the *Egyptians* did the *Israelites*, to the very borders of the sea, yet I shall look back, as they did, when once I have passed the waves and set my foot on the eternal shore, and see those enemies no more for ever. ✕

But I am wandering from the subject on enquiry, unless it be by this induction of particulars, to lead you into the closer investigation of your own character. You see what the conflicts of flesh and spirit are, and how fully they prove in the point of

\* Hosea xiii. 19.

view in which I have considered them, an evidence of the renewed life. Let me desire you to anatomize your heart by such a plan of dissection, and lay open its inmost recesses to this discovery. If you feel (as I am persuaded you must feel, if a life of grace is begun in the soul) those different principles contending in your frame; see whether your infirmities are *unallowed* infirmities? Do you groan as *Paul* did, being burthened? Is sin your greatest abhorrence; and would you give the world, had you the possession of it, to be for ever freed from its power? And in these moments of warfare when the enemy surprises you unguarded, and leads you captive; do you march as a captive in war, not free, but sullen? Oh! it is a blessed thing to have an heart reproving, and an hand smiting, when corruptions seem to gain the ascendancy; for it lays the sinner where he ought continually to lay,

lay, in the dust before God; and it tends to endear the Saviour more exceedingly to the heart. Untried souls are like *Ephraim, a cake not turned*.<sup>\*</sup> They come forth delicately, as the deluded *Monarch* we read of, concluding *the bitterness of death to be passed*:<sup>†</sup> and know not what those seasons are, in which *clouds return after the rain*.<sup>‡</sup> But the Lord's people must ever be a tried people, and in the conflicts of flesh and spirit, brought as they frequently are, under *the saws and harrows of iron, and passing through the brick-kiln*,<sup>§</sup> (which spiritually considered is a just type of the holy warfare) they are feelingly taught, what the Great Master meant by the cross and self-denial: and which *one* of his disciples declared, and *all* of them find, that *it is through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God*. ✕

\* Hof. vii. 8.

† 1 Sam. xv. 32.

‡ Eccles. xii. 2.

§ 2 Sam. xii. 31.



I find the subject I am upon increasing upon me and leading into a much wider field than I originally intended. Some smaller evidences of the renewed life, which might otherwise have been brought forward I shall therefore pass by. The *chastisements* of a tender Father, which, either in the very moment of exercise, or in the after fruits they produce, like the rod of *Aaron*, distinguished from all others in budding,\* prove that they are sanctified afflictions, might open a large subject of this kind.—That *persecution* also, which is for *righteousness sake*, might be much insisted on, as no inconsiderable testimony, when in conjunction with others to the same amount. The sweet answers to *prayers*, which sometimes come in so plain and direct a way, as manifest the communion between God and the gracious soul; all these, with an enlightened eye, carry with them

\* Numb. xvii. 6, 8.

evidences of *God's* love, and *his* people's adoption. And I have been led not unfrequently to think that we derive both an assurance of the renewed life, and the most striking testimony of God's attention to us together, in *that hatred* which the unbelieving world bears to the Lord's people, in that it serves to separate, and to make his people come out from among them. We are too apt to complain of the world's unfriendliness to us on account of our piety, and would be seeking out means, if it were possible, of softening their displeasure. Why, it is one of the happiest means under grace of our safety! The Lord fences up our way with those hedges and thorns, on purpose to keep us from their snares. For so much of corruption lurks about the heart, that we are in continual danger. Like bodies in a state of recipience, it is dangerous to come within the region of contagion; or  
like

like barrels of gunpowder, the least spark of collision by igniting serves to set the whole in a blaze. Oh! it is in much mercy, depend upon it. God draws the line of separation, and suffers the carnal mind to be not only enmity against God, but against his people also, in which much of their safety consists. *Marvel not therefore if the world hate you.*

The sealings of the Holy Spirit, as an evidence of the renewed life, will form a very proper conclusion, both to the subject and to this letter. It becomes indeed so desirable a testimony, that it is not to be wondered at, believers in all ages have so passionately longed for it; for it brings the soul into the suburbs of heaven, and becomes an earnest of that joy which is *unspeakable and full of glory*. The Church, in a beautiful stile of imagery, is represented as asking it. *Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm, for love is strong as death;*



*death; jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.\** The heart and the arm of Jesus, at once the tenderest and the most powerful, always in remembrance, and always in view, a e aptly chosen, to express the desires of the soul; and the causes assigned, in the jealousy and anxiety of an undetermined state, could have had no brighter figure than the insatiableness of the grave, and the ardency of a flame, to manifest the importance of the object. It is a consoling consideration to the mind of a believer, that *the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his.†* But it is a vast accession of rapture to the soul who hath received this testimony, *to set to his seal also that God is true.‡* For here is a correspondence of testimony, while the Holy Spirit witnesseth to our spirit, *face answering to face, as the heart of man*

\* Cant. viii. 6. † 2 Tim. ii. 19. ‡ John iii. 37.

*to his friend*, or as the image of the seal is found on the wax, exactly expressive of every lineament on the cypher.

But how desirable soever such an evidence is, it is not the happy experience of all God's children during the whole life of grace, but with many, the *dying* hour only becomes the *sealing* hour. And even in those to whom the Blessed Spirit hath imparted this precious gift before, it is not always discernable. The heart of man is not unsimilar in this particular to the face of the dial, on whom, though the hour marks remain always the same, yet the information they are designed to afford is only in the season when the sun shines upon them. So though the impressions of grace are wrought upon the soul in lasting characters, yet it is only when the Sun of Righteousness shines upon his own work, that the proofs appear.

If you question how the sealings of  
th

the Holy Spirit are best distinguished? I answer, principally by their effects. The sealed soul is as humble soul; in whom increasing affection to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ will manifest itself, and to all his people, his ordinances, his service, and his worship; and as the mind is weaning from every thing earthly, the desires are tending upward to those that are heavenly. You will very easily therefore, by these standards of character, ascertain the important question. The sealings of the Holy Spirit are amongst the highest attainments in the spiritual life, and yet, in proportion as the soul advances in grace, it sinks lower in humility; not unlike the ripened ears of corn, which, when fittest for harvest, bend the nearer to the earth. Do you find such effects in *your* experience? As the Lord lifts you up in mercy, do you cast yourself down in self-abasements? And every step you mount up the ladder



ladder of grace, doth it lead you to see clearer *the rock whence you are hewn, and the hole of the pit from whence you are digged?*\*—Testimonies of this nature carry with them the most undeniable assurances of the Spirit's sealings, and solve those problems of vital religion which the people of God only understand, but which are inexplicable to the whole world beside; when we see a *Patriarch* in the very moment of divine favor most abased, and an *Apostle* who had been caught up to heaven most self-condemned. If you find (as I pray God you may) in *your* experience such corresponding testimonies, you will enter into a full subscription to what the Lord says to the *Prophet*, and confess, that the highest attainments in the present state induce the effects he mentions. *Thou shalt remember thyself, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, when I am pacified to thee*

\* *Isaiah li. 1.*

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*for all the evil thou hast done, saith the Lord God.\**

I only for the present add, may the review of the evidences I have brought before you be followed with these effects, and enable you to make a *personal* application of the divine assurance to your own case, with which the Lord comforts his church: *Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.†*

\* Ezek. xvi. 66.

† Isa. lx. 1, 2, 19.

## LETTER V.

HAVING fully accomplished the purpose for which I originally opened this correspondence, in bringing before you *the evidences of the renewed life*, by way of forming consolation in the review against a dying hour, I should have taken leave of the subject with only once more recommending the whole to your most earnest attention, and contented myself with following it up with fervent supplications to the God of all grace, that his blessing might render my labours and wishes for you effectual. But knowing how apt the mind is to be raising objections and fears against itself, and to doubt, even in the fullest evidence, I have re-assumed the pen, to silence, if possible, those more general and common prejudices, by which the soul is sometimes, and

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indeed



indeed not unfrequently, prompted to call in question the whole of experimental godliness, and to fancy it can be but a delusion, even after having *set to his seal that God is true.*

You have seen what a plentiful provision the Lord hath made, in the many and various evidences which I have enumerated, for his believing people to feed on in their journey through life; and I am persuaded that in the enjoyment of them the faithful followers of the Lamb in all ages have kept house, if I may so say, and sat down as to a full table, when all outward circumstances have failed. But do not from hence imagine that there were no seasons in the histories of the most eminent saints of God, in which their spiritual food was scanty, and the waters of the sanctuary ran low. The people of God are uniformly supposed to be a tried people, and exercised with a thousand fears, and doubts and difficulties.

culties. Else why those *exceeding great and precious promises* with which the word of God abounds, but for their consolation in seasons of darkness? But from hence I would desire to arm you with the recollection that these exercises are nothing new or uncommon in the christian warfare. It is very consistent in the life of grace to be like the *Apostles*, one day in the *mount*, enjoying the fullest assurance, and another to be full of doubts and misgivings.\* The faith of the *Patriarch*, which at one time could give up even his son to death at the divine command, at another could not trust God to rescue him from a temporary danger.\* This fluctuating state, arising as it doth from the remains of unbelief, and the imperfection of grace in the heart; humiliating as it is no doubt to our nature, and destructive sometimes as it proves to

\* See Matt. xvii. 4, 20.

† Compare Gen. xx. with xxii.

our highest comforts; yet is one of these things which our compassionate Redeemer over-rules to the accomplishment of great good. For it serves to teach a man by such experience, yet more feelingly *the plague of his own heart*, and in such humbling lessons of our own insufficiency, it cannot but tend to endear the Redeemer the nearer to our affections. And indeed so far is this conflict rightly considered, from carrying with it causes of terror in the fear that the whole of our belief is but a delusion, that it ought to be regarded as among the most positive proofs of grace in the soul. You are sometimes tempted to question the reality of your conversion towards God, because none of the evidences of the renewed life at that time appear. But let me ask, could you regret the want of them if you had not before experienced them? How is it possible to lament the loss of what we never enjoyed?    However  
different



different the feelings are between the manifestation of the Spirit's gracious influence on the soul, and the hiding of his countenance. Certainly the soul mourning his *absence*, as much as when rejoicing in his *presence*, is grace in exercise, and affords a precious evidence of the soul's adoption to God.

I cannot perhaps more effectually answer the object I have in view, in silencing all apprehensions and fears arising from this quarter, than by referring you to the book of God for the example of holy men in past ages in similar situations. For when you see that such cases are not unusual in the lives of the faithful, it will not only tend to reconcile you to your trials, but serve to convince you, I hope, that it is among the family features of God's children.

The history of the *Church* itself, upon various occasions, is very instructive to this purpose. *I said* (says the Church

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in a time when comforts ran low) *my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord.*—But yet as a proof that it was only *fears*, and not the real state of the case, she immediately adds, in the same breath, *remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to mind, and therefore have I hope.\** As if she had said, remembering the gracious dealings of God with my soul in the seasons of conviction and conversion, though present assurances are gone, yet I have those former manifestations of divine mercy, and therefore cannot but hope. And upon a similar instance, in another period of the Church's history, we find, that in the very moment *that Zion said the Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me*, she had been calling upon *the heavens, and the earth, and the mountains, to sing and be joyful,*

\* Lamentations, iii. 10, &c.

*because*

*because the Lord had comforted his people, and would have mercy upon his afflicted.†* And as in the experience of the Church in general, so we find the same uniform testimony of believers in particular. David tells us that in his haste he said all men were liars :† I shall surely perish (says he) one day by the hand of Saul.† But yet David could and did declare, that though he walked through the valley of the shadow of death he would fear no evil, for his heart was fixed trusting in the Lord. I said indeed (says he) I am cast out of the sight of thine eyes. But to shew his assurance in the very moment of doubting, he instantly subjoins, *nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my prayer when I cried unto thee.* And under the fullest persuasion he tries to animate all true believers to the same confidence. *O fear the Lord all ye his saints, for they that fear him lack nothing.* In like manner

\* Isaiah xlix. 13. 14. † Psalm cxvi. 11.

† 1 Sam. xxvii. 1.

the Apostle *Paul* is another eminent example of the same kind. He had his seasons of triumph in the strength of faith equal to any man, and he had his hours of despondency and fear also. From the same voice which defies all created power *to separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus the Lord*, we have that mournful question arising from the very bottom of his heart; *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* From these few instances which I have produced you see how very consistent with a state of *general* assurance *occasional* doubts are arising, as they do, out of the remains of unbelief and corruption in the heart; so that it is no uncommon thing, in the experience of a true believer, at one time to call all the promises his own, to triumph in the divine faithfulness, and to be basking in the full sunshine of the light of the divine countenance; and shortly  
after



after to be brought under such a cloud of temptation, as to question whether he had ever any interest in Christ, but like *David* to fancy himself *cast out of the sight of God's eyes*.

But if those occasional distresses of the soul be productive of the blessed effects they are intended to accomplish, and which I before remarked, namely, to give the *sinner* deeper views of the corruption of his own heart, thereby to endear the *Saviour* the more abundantly to his affections, they are then what *Paul* calls *light afflictions of a moment*, and which in the very season of their operation, by a spiritual chemistry, become converted into good, in working out *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*. They come like messengers of sadness, but in disguise; which, when throwing aside their garments, and opening the sacred purposes of their commission, explain the Lord's tender concern for his people. *For a small moment*

*moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercy will I gather thee.—In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.*

Though I conceive such views ought to reconcile every true believer to the most trying moments of darkness, when once convinced that the Lord hath begun the work of grace in the soul, yet I know full well such is the state of the human mind, that the highest faith is not proof against all the various stratagems by which the enemy enters in at that traiterous gate of unbelief which is in every man's heart.—And were I to call upon you to come forward with every objection which this heart of unbelief fosters in secret against itself, it would form, I fear, a much larger volume than the one I now send you, so as to enumerate the several doubts and apprehensions of the desponding  
mind,

mind, and to answer them satisfactorily. To hear how the Lord's people are calling continually in question every evidence which God in mercy hath afforded them of the renewed life : arguing their want of faith in the very moment of believing ; pleading the hardness of their heart in the very season of growing under a sense of it ; and supposing that they are abandoned by God when their anxiety for his favour loudly proclaims that grace is then in exercise, in desiring *that favour more than life itself*. Methinks I hear you say, even while I am writing, is it possible that a work of grace is begun in my heart, when I find so much corruption lurking under my best actions ? Could I live at such a distance from the Lord, as I find by woeful experience I do, if the Lord possessed the first place in my esteem ? Could I be so dead and indifferent, as I too frequently find my heart, to things eternal, if things temporal



temporal had not the ascendancy over me? The world, like a tide, washes away my time, my thoughts, my affections, and even in those solemn moments, when drawing nigh the throne of grace to enjoy communion with God, I too often find that *when I would do good evil is present with me*. A croud of vain thoughts breaks in upon me, and follows me as close as the shadow does the substance. Can such a state be consistent with a life of grace?—Yes! Such complaints are as old as the Church of Jesus itself; they have been the uniform language of all his people time immemorial, and renewed from age to age. And were you capable in the seasons when they are most oppressive upon you to analyze them, you would perceive how in a great measure they refute themselves.—Could you complain of *corruption* still remaining in you if the heart was obdurate? Could you *lament* the distance at which you live from  
 God

God, if your desires were not awakened after greater closeness of communion? Could you *mourn* over a worldly-minded heart, if that heart really found its chief pleasure from the world? Do you not observe, in the very principles of the complaints themselves, that they are your greatest burden and distress. And if even a crowd of vain thoughts break in upon you in seasons of devotion, are they not rather the unavoidable intrusion of unbidden, unwelcome visitors, than invited guests. Let me beg of you, only to be just both to the Lord, and to yourself, in a proper estimate of things as they really are, and you will then find that the distressed heart, like the jaundiced eye viewing things under false mediums, gives a colour to the several objects it beholds, which doth not belong to them, but is in fact in itself. In short, to souls within the bond of the covenant, were your fears as numerous as

the sand on the sea shore, they may all be brought within the compass of three: the fear of our enemies, the fear of God, and the fear of ourselves. The fear of what our *enemies* can do, is altogether ill-founded, for the promise is, that *no weapon formed against thee shall prosper; but if the enemy comes in like a flood the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.* And if a believing soul can say, *the Lord is on my side*, he may always add, *I will not fear what man can do unto me.* You cannot fear that the Lord will forsake you, for he hath said, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. I will not* (says God) *turn away from them to do them good.* Yes! but you say you fear that *you* shall turn away from the Lord.—No! says God in the same blessed promise, *I will put my fear in them that they shall not depart from me.* You see how graciously the Lord provides for his people's safety, as well as his own faithfulness, in which  
their



their security lies. Away then, I charge you, with all your unbelieving fears, and bring no more objections against the precious promises of the Lord's unchanging love to his people. Rather assume the confidence of the wife of *Monaah*, and say, in language like her's, but with much greater cause of assurance, if the Lord had not intended mercy, never would he have shewn us such things, and *things which accompany salvation*.

And now what shall I add more on a subject so very solemn, interesting, and tender? Let me only refresh your memory once again, with the recollection that what is here offered is the last advice of the Father, in the night of death, *before he goes hence to be no more seen*. I have considered myself, indeed all along, as rising with thankfulness from the supper of life, and waiting with my lighted taper in my hand for the Master's call to rest; but knowing  
your

your hour of sleep to be approaching, I have paused before I bid you farewell, to tell you of the softest chambers of repose *to them who sleep in Jesus*. My latest breath will be a prayer to God, that he may give you grace to *live* in the possession of those evidences of the renewed life, that your *death* may be in full assurance of glory.—Farewel.



FINIS.

